



# *Inside Ag*

## *August 6, 2008*

### **Livestock Scales**

Colorado plays a significant role in the nation's livestock industry. The 2008 USDA Colorado Agricultural Statistics Bulletin ranks our state 10<sup>th</sup> in the number of all cattle and calves, 4<sup>th</sup> in all sheep and lambs, and 15<sup>th</sup> in all hogs and pigs.



As the summer grazing season progresses, ranchers and other livestock sellers are making plans to move their animals to market for sale in the fall. A significant amount of money will be paid for livestock based on the scale weight. Last year, Colorado Department of Agriculture inspectors performed approximately 500 livestock scale inspections throughout the state. Sixty-eight devices failed inspection and the owners were required to repair them.

The Department works closely with the USDA to ensure that scales used for sales of livestock are inspected annually for accuracy. "The USDA's

Packers and Stockyards Program promotes fair business practices and competitive environments to market livestock and meat. Accurate weights are a central part of this process," said Stacey Schofield, Agricultural Marketing Specialist with the USDA's Packers and Stockyards Western Regional Office.

Without regular inspection, the accuracy of the scales used to weigh live cattle, pigs, sheep and goats would not be known. Sellers expect to be paid fairly, and accurate weight determination is important. "The weight determined on these devices plays a crucial role in the flow of commerce," said Ivan Steinke with the Colorado Livestock Association.



Livestock scales typically have a capacity of 3,000 to 40,000 lb. Inspectors check to ensure that the scale is properly maintained and operated, and perform device accuracy testing. For instance, the scale must be accessible and the deck sound and kept clean.

Annual testing of commercial devices by the Department is mandated in the Colorado weights and measures law, the Measurement Standards Act. Large Scale Program inspectors use heavy capacity trucks equipped with cranes, 5,000 lb weight carts, and 15,000 lb in total test weights. These five specialized inspectors test scales at feed lots, sale barns, ranches, grain elevators, ports of entry, manufacturers' shipping docks, truck stops, meat packing plants, moving and storage companies, mines, power plants, railroads, sand and gravel companies, highway construction sites, and other locations. These inspectors are also responsible for the testing of grain moisture meters that are used by grain elevators to determine moisture content of the grain that they purchase from farmers.

For more information, please contact Jonathan Handy, Measurement Standards Large Scale Inspection Program Administrator, by e-mail ([jonathan.handy@ag.state.co.us](mailto:jonathan.handy@ag.state.co.us)) or by telephone (303-867-9232). Additional information can also be found on the Department's website ([MS Device Inspection Programs](#)).

